



# NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** July 29, 2004  
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## **PARTNERING TO PREVENT FAMILY SWIMMING POOL DROWNINGS**

Much like every summer, family swimming pools have literally popped-up all over Lincoln. However, this year, many of the newer pools are deep enough to pose a serious risk for drowning for children. While the enjoyment and relaxation these pools provide on a hot summer day are appreciated, it is critically important that the public is aware of the potential for drowning and injury associated with using and/or owning one of these pools.

The local Injury Surveillance System data indicate that 166 Lancaster County children were treated in emergency rooms for near-drowning injuries from 2000 through 2002. Fourteen of these near-drownings occurred in swimming pools. The National SAFE KIDS Campaign reports that the average cost for a near-drowning injury is \$75,000, and that as many as 20% of near-drowning survivors suffer severe, permanent neurological disabilities.

The Lincoln-Lancaster County SAFE KIDS Coalition and the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department are joining forces to make residents aware of these dangers and their consequences.

To aid in this effort, local swimming pool retailers will be asked to display placards and informational brochures providing swimming pool safety tips and information on Lincoln Municipal Code (LMC) Chapter 8.36 throughout the summer and again in the Spring and Summer of 2005.

LMC 8.36, Family Swimming Pools, requires:

- Pools having a depth of eighteen (18) inches or more be completely surrounded by a fence at least 48 inches (4') high;
- Doors and gates must be self-closing and self-latching.

For pools with sidewalls greater than four feet (4') high, contact the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department at 441-8022 for specific requirements. For a copy of the complete ordinance, go to <http://ci.lincoln.ne.us/city/attorn/lmc/ti08/ch836.pdf>, or contact the Health Department or the American Red Cross at 441-6389.

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“The ordinance is in place to prevent drowning injuries and deaths. We want to be sure the

public is aware of this ordinance and takes action to protect children,” says Scott Holmes, Manager of Environmental Public Health at the Health Department. Holmes indicates that proper fencing is one of the best ways to prevent drownings. Property owners without adequate fencing will be asked to either put up a fence or remove the pool.

Mary Matthiessen, Chair of the Lincoln-Lancaster County SAFE KIDS Coalition’s Water Safety Task Force says, “The rising popularity of these deeper, family pools greatly increases the potential for young children to suffer drowning-related injuries. The community must be proactive in its effort to prevent these tragedies. The life of a child is a tragic price to pay for neglecting to take reasonable prevention measures.”